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Senator Cola-Pietro, Representative Shipiro and Members of the General Law Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Bill #5225. My name is Rayallen Bergman and I am the Prevention Coordinator for the Southeastern Regional Action Council.

Salvia divinorum is becoming more widely known about and used in modern culture. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), for 2006 estimated that about 1.8 million persons aged 12 or older had used *Salvia divinorum* in their lifetime, of which approximately 750,000 had done so in that year. Youth ages 18-25 are 3X more likely to use salvia within a 12 month period.

Salvia is being smoked by individuals to induce hallucinations, the effects of which are described by its users to be similar to those induced by LSD and Ecstasy. It is being widely marketed on Internet sites aimed at young adults and adolescents eager to experiment with these types of dangerous substances. Over 5000 videos are available on YouTube sharing the "Salvia Experience". With little restriction, Salvia is already being shipped into Connecticut and being sold in CT Specialty Stores.

Salvia divinorum leaves are most often smoked or mixed with a tea for a longer lasting high. When the untreated leaves are smoked, the high is less intense which has led to more concentrated preparations or extracts. When smoked, the high is quick and intense, yet lasts approx. 15-20 minutes. These extracts are the main psychoactive ingredient Salvinorin A (which is accountable for 96% of the effect) and Salvinorin B.

An ounce of salvia leaves sells for around \$30 on the Internet and in specialty stores. The liquid extract from the plant, salvinorin A are sold in various strengths labeled "5x" through "60x." A gram of the 5x strength, about the weight of a plastic pen cap, is about \$12 while 60x strength is around \$65. By isolating these extracts, recreational users have also experimented in combination with various other drugs.

Once these drugs are in the body here are just a **few** of the physical and psychological effects. The loss of physical coordination, visual alterations or visions, dream-like state, sense of total confusion or madness, sense of flying, floating twisting or turning and tunnel vision.

It is important to share with you how this drug has impacted us in Southeastern CT and our work as the Regional Action Council. The RAC's are where the community turns to for help in combating and preventing substance abuse that threaten our children and the health and safety of our citizens.

We have had numerous inquiries into Salvia. We know, anecdotally, that this drug is being used on the college campuses, with Military personnel, young adults (22-28) and is quickly gaining momentum throughout other population and communities. We also know that this drug is being sold at local head shops.

We have incorporated Salvia awareness and education into all of our Current Drug Trend Workshops and Information. Through our efforts, School Resource Officers, high school and college health staff, college Resident Assistants and Directors, and Youth Services providers have already been educated on the growing dangerous trend.

At this point, we know that other states have prohibited Salvia growth, sales, importation or extracts of the plant. We strongly support that Connecticut follow in these state's footsteps. I would rather be on the front end of preventing the dangers of the drug then waiting until we are 20 steps behind.

Thank you.